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**Aotearoa/New Zealand**

For a socialist and democratic alternative

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# The truth behind their war

*Eric Ruder answers all the most important questions surrounding the planned US assault on Iraq.*

George W. Bush wants war with Iraq, and his administration has launched a full-scale public relations campaign to build support. If you listened only to the mainstream media, you might think that the case for a military assault to bring about a "regime change" is completely airtight.

Iraq has developed "weapons of mass destruction" in order to threaten the US and its neighbours. Saddam Hussein is an "evil madman" who has shown his willingness to use these weapons in wars with other nations and against "his own people." And Iraq has defied United Nations (UN) weapons inspectors for a decade. But at every step in this argument, US officials rely on exaggeration, half truths, rank hypocrisy, or outright lies – and the media eats it up. Let's look at each point in turn.



*Over 15,000 rallied against the war in Sydney on 30 November*

## Does Iraq have weapons of mass destruction?

After enduring decimation in the first Gulf War and more than a decade of UN sanctions, it's highly unlikely that Iraq has a threatening arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. Nevertheless, George W. Bush has repeatedly warned that Saddam Hussein somehow continues to develop vast quantities of chemical and biological weapons and that Saddam has also begun a nuclear weapons program.

Citing satellite photos, Bush asserts that Iraq has reconstructed buildings at a site formerly alleged to be part of Iraq's nuclear programme, and Bush says that Iraq tried to purchase high

strength aluminium tubes and other equipment needed for constructing gas centrifuges used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons. "If the Iraqi regime is able to produce, buy, or steal an amount of highly enriched uranium a little larger than a single softball, it could have a nuclear weapon in less than a year."

Author and activist Robert Jensen points out the absurdity of this claim: "That's the equivalent of saying, 'If Iraq had a nuclear weapon, it would have a

used for conventional weapons not prohibited by UN resolutions. The London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies makes the same point. "Iraq does not possess facilities to produce fissile material in sufficient amounts for nuclear weapons," and "it would require several years and extensive foreign assistance to build such fissile production facilities."

includes Kuwait, the nation that Iraq invaded in 1991.

The idea that Iraq has the capacity to or the interest in launching missiles against the US isn't even taken seriously by the CIA. In March 2001, the CIA admitted that "[m]ost agencies believe that Iraq is unlikely to test before 2015 any [intercontinental ballistic missiles] that would threaten the United States, even if UN prohibitions were eliminated or significantly reduced in the next few years."



(Above and Right) 400,000 marched in London on 28 September

nuclear weapon.' Creating the other components of a nuclear bomb would be relatively easy; the fissile material is the issue."

The CIA also seems to dispute Bush's assertions. A recent CIA report says it will take at least five years for Iraq to develop the uranium necessary for a nuclear weapon. And the report admits that the aluminium centrifuge tubes are often

## Does Iraq pose a significant threat to its neighbours or the US?

Bush portrays a war against Iraq as necessary for protecting the Middle East from Saddam Hussein, but Iraq's neighbours oppose a US war. And that

Bush has warned that Iraq "has a growing fleet of manned and unmanned aerial vehicles that could be used to disperse chemical or biological weapons across broad areas" and that "we're concerned that Iraq is exploring ways of using these [unmanned aerial vehicles] for missions targeting the United States."

This is extremely far fetched, according to military experts. Iraqi airspace is closely watched by US radar systems. A slow-moving unmanned plane would be shot down the moment it left Iraqi airspace and would never reach the US – at least 5,500 miles away.

“As a guesstimate, Iraq’s present holdings of delivery systems and chemical and biological weapons seem most likely to be so limited in technology and operational lethality that they do not constrain US freedom of action or do much to intimidate Iraq’s neighbours,” said Anthony Cordesman, a security analyst at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

In an attempt to tie the war on Iraq to the US “war on terror,” Bush has repeatedly raised the spectre of ties between Iraq and Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda network. Again, this is not only far fetched but unsubstantiated. Iraq is a secular regime hostile to Islamic fundamentalist opposition, while Al Qaeda has been a critic of Iraq’s secularism. But beyond the fact that Iraq and Al Qaeda are natural enemies rather than allies, no evidence linking Iraq and Al Qaeda has been turned up even though the FBI and CIA have vigorously sought it out.

## Why won’t Iraq allow UN weapons inspectors into the country?

In truth, Saddam Hussein agreed in early September to allow weapons inspectors

to re-enter the country. But US officials feared that Iraq might actually pass such a test. So Secretary of State Colin Powell personally pressed chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix not to enter Iraq until a new, tougher resolution authorising inspections was passed by the UN Security Council. The truth is that the US has no intention of allowing Iraq to pass the test of weapons inspections. The US wants to use Iraq’s supposed lack of cooperation with inspectors as its rationale for war to accomplish its main goal – “regime change.”



But the US has still managed to succeed in portraying Iraq as unwilling to allow inspectors into the country. In December 1998, the US ordered UN inspectors out of Iraq ahead of Operation Desert Fox – one of the heaviest bombing campaigns against Iraq since the end of the 1991 Gulf War. But today, the official version of events – repeated again and again in the mainstream media – is that the bombing was in response to Saddam Hussein’s expulsion of weapons inspectors from Iraq.

Just a few weeks later, the *Boston Globe* reported in January 1999, that Iraq’s long-standing accusations that the US was

using the UN weapons inspection teams to spy on Iraq were true. “US intelligence agencies, working under the cover of the UN, carried out an ambitious spying operation designed to penetrate Iraq’s intelligence apparatus and track the movement of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein,” wrote the *Globe*. This intelligence, it turns out, was used to select targets during Desert Fox.

If Iraq wasn’t always the most cooperative with weapons inspectors, this revelation explains why. To top it all off with a healthy dose of hypocrisy, the

US has refused to allow international inspectors into its own chemical and biological weapons facilities, citing “proprietary commercial interests.”

## But didn’t Saddam Hussein gas his own people?

This is the most cynical reason given for war against Iraq. That’s because the US was good friends with Saddam Hussein when the Iraqi military used poison gas to suppress the Kurdish opposition in 1988, killing up to 5,000 people in the village of Halabja. What’s more, the US had supplied Iraq with the precursors necessary to build biochemical weapons – anthrax, botulism, and a slew of other toxic stuff. After the Halabja “incident,” the US downplayed the attack, issuing nothing more than a rote criticism.

But the hypocrisy runs much deeper still. The US supplied Iraq with all sorts of chemical and biological weaponry



long after it knew that Saddam was using these weapons in its war against Iran. Nevertheless, the US administration provided "crop-spraying" helicopters to Iraq (subsequently used in chemical attacks on the Kurds in 1988), gave Iraq access to intelligence information that allowed Iraq to "calibrate" its mustard attacks on Iranian troops (1984), seconded its air force officers to work with their Iraqi counterparts (from 1986), approved technological exports to Iraq's missile procurement agency to extend the missiles' range (1988), and blocked bills condemning Iraq in the House of Representatives (1985) and Senate (1988).

Only now, when the US is making a case for war against Iraq, does it want to call attention to Iraq's use of chemical and biological weapons. But no one should take the US government's newfound concern for the people of Iraq seriously. On the short list of candidates to replace Saddam after the regime change is none other than General Nizar Al-Khazraji, the field commander in charge of the attack on Halabja!

## So if it's not about weapons of mass destruction, why is the US pursuing war against Iraq?

Every once in a while, the real war aims of the US do sneak into the mainstream press. A September 10 article in the *Boston Globe* explains how the most hawkish players in Washington think tanks and military circles – once relegated to the margins – are on the verge of making their grand designs into official policy. It's worth quoting at length:

Iraq, the hawks argue, is just the first piece of the puzzle. After an ouster of Hussein, they say, the United States will have more leverage to act against Syria and Iran, will be in a better position to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and will be able to rely less on Saudi oil. "The goal is not just a new regime in Iraq. The goal is a new Middle East," said Raad Alkadiri, an Iraq analyst with PFC, a Washington-based energy consulting organisation. "The goal has been and remains one of the main driving factors of pre-emptive action against Iraq." A friendly Iraq – home to the world's second-largest oil reserves – would provide an alternative to Saudi Arabia for basing US troops. Its oil reserves would make Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, less important in

setting prices, he said. In general, others contend, a US-allied Iraq could work to diminish the influence of OPEC, long dominated by Saudi Arabia, over oil supplies and prices.

Iraq's oil reserves are vast – about 11 percent of the world's proven oil reserves or 112 billion barrels. The whole world knows about the importance of Iraq's oil reserves – the question is who will control its flow.

Iraq's oil is certainly a worthy enough prize on its own – especially if you happen to own a major oil corporation. But Washington's war planners are looking at the big picture. They're aiming at an even bigger prize. War against Iraq "would be the culmination of a plan ten years or more in the making, carried out by those who believe the United States must seize the opportunity for global domination, even if it means becoming the 'American imperialists' that our enemies always claimed we were," wrote Jay Bookman, deputy editorial page editor of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, in late September. This goal, in fact, explains why the US doesn't hesitate to issue the UN ultimatums or worry much about what happens after Saddam is toppled. The point is to show that the US can and will pursue its military and economic interests anywhere in the world without regard to any other nation.



The National Security Strategy document released recently – known generally as the Bush Doctrine – formulated this vision of the US as the world's unchallenged superpower. It defended the pre-emptive use of US military power, including regime change and the use of nuclear weapons; the refusal of Washington to be bound by any international treaty or organisation; the prevention of the emergence of any strategic rival; and the explicit linkage of US economic and military policy.

In the short run, there's another reason that the US is pushing for war against Iraq at this moment. Israel's war on the Palestinians has had the effect of making the US hold on the Middle East more tenuous by alienating Arab regimes that the US once counted as allies. This has accelerated the Bush administration's timetable for bringing a "friendly regime" to power in Iraq so that it can continue to maintain military bases in the region.

## **Does it still make sense to oppose the war if the US gets the backing of the UN or a significant number of European countries?**

War against Iraq – whether under the auspices of the UN or the US and its allies – will take a tremendous human toll. The first Gulf War in 1991 killed as many as 200,000 Iraqis in a matter of weeks. And since then, UN sanctions have taken the lives of at least one million more – according to the UN's own figures – and turned the lives of ordinary Iraqis into a living hell.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Iraq was a relatively developed Middle Eastern country with a highly developed infrastructure, a decent health care system, and one of the highest literacy rates in the region. But the UN has overseen the economic and social devastation of Iraq. The US claims that it has no gripe with the people of Iraq and yet has insisted that UN sanctions prohibit the import to Iraq of so-called "dual use" goods – goods that can potentially be used for military purposes. This includes staples of a modern economy such as chlorine, which is essential to water purification.

Indeed, many of Iraq's children die from diarrhoea caused by drinking contaminated water. Between 1990 and 2000, Iraq's infant mortality rate increased by an astonishing 160 percent – the next worst increase was in Kenya at 24 percent. The UN claims to operate a humanitarian "oil-for-food" programme to alleviate the suffering in Iraq. Under the program, Iraq can export oil to pay for food, but this programme only generates US\$172 per person – hardly enough to sustain the nutritional, let alone medical, needs of the population.

Finally, whether the war is given the blessing of a UN Security Council resolution or not, the aims of the war – US domination of Iraq and the Middle East – will remain unchanged. ■



# Cheney and Rumsfeld: The business of war

By Mike Tait

Two years ago George W. Bush Junior was appointed US President by the conservative Supreme Court. Even though he won less than half of the popular vote (in an election with about 50% turnout), he acted as if he had a mandate for extremely right wing policies – paying back companies that supported his campaign and appointing corporate lobbyists and right wing ideologues to his administration.

Bush killed federal lawsuits against big tobacco companies – they donated US\$7 million – but have saved themselves up to US\$100 billion in damages. Rules that would make mining companies (who gave \$2.6 million) pay for water contamination were scrapped. Most extreme of all, Bush's energy policy was largely written by the energy industry themselves, unsurprisingly the US pulled out of the Kyoto agreement and coal, oil, and electricity companies saved billions in carbon dioxide emission controls.

In April last year, Robert Reich, Labour Secretary under Clinton, warned, "At some point – perhaps as soon as the 2002 mid-term elections, surely no later than the next presidential election – the public will be aghast at what is happening. The backlash against business may be thunderous."

Bush was saved by the September 11 terrorist attacks. Instead of facing a

backlash, Bush has declared an open-ended war on "evil," rolled back domestic civil liberties, occupied Afghanistan, and stands on the brink of renewed war with Iraq. Bush's cabinet represents an increasingly parasitic elite, that has grown rich from the economic deregulation and stock market speculation of the 80s and 90s. In this cabinet, Rumsfeld and Cheney personify the corruption and the militarism of the US elite.

## Rumsfeld

Donald Rumsfeld is a Cold War veteran. He served in the Nixon Administration, and was Ford's Defence Secretary from 1975-7. He was appointed shortly after the US defeat in the Vietnam War, and was in office during the Indonesian invasion of East Timor. Rumsfeld made millions in the private sector during the 80s and 90s, working as CEO for pharmaceutical giant G.D. Searle, and as a director of ABB, among other companies. He owns between \$50 and \$210 million worth of shares in biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and energy.

But Rumsfeld continued to keep his hand in at politics, sitting on commissions into space warfare and the ballistic missile "threat" to the US. He was also Ronald Reagan's Middle East

envoy, visiting Iraq in 1983 to assure Saddam Hussein of US help in the Iran-Iraq war – even though US intelligence knew Saddam would use chemical weapons against Iran.

Rumsfeld's appointment signals the triumph of US "hawks," especially the Ballistic Missile Defence lobby. More than anything BMD illustrates Rumsfeld's approach to foreign policy. The US has won the Cold War, and now must lock in US military pre-eminence forever – to achieve what the Clinton Administration called "full spectrum dominance." A



*Donald Rumsfeld*

missile shield would violate the ABM treaty, but more importantly it would also break another treaty banning weapons in space. With the collapse of its Soviet rival, the US now has the chance to put weapons into space unchallenged, and cement US dominance for all time. The



2000 Rumsfeld Commission on space security concluded that: "We know from history that every medium – air, land and sea – has seen conflict... Reality indicates that space will be no different."

But the warmongers around Donald Rumsfeld were not just dreaming of space war: "The end of the Soviet threat does not mean we no longer need nuclear weapons," Rumsfeld told the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2002. "To the contrary, the US nuclear arsenal remains an important part of our deterrence strategy, and helps to dissuade the emergence of potential or would-be peer competitors, by underscoring the futility of trying to sprint toward parity with us or superiority."

A document prepared for Cheney and Rumsfeld in January 2001 by the Project for a New American Century think tank (of which Rumsfeld and Cheney are founders) proposed military control of the Gulf region as essential, suggesting the unresolved conflict with Iraq as a perfect justification for US intervention. The document, "Rebuilding America's Defences," also identifies Iran and China as potential threats after Iraq; and advocates the development of bio-weapons.

The enemy has changed from the Soviet Union to "rogue states," or "potential peer competitors," but the insatiable need for more military spending has remained.

But isn't military spending just a drain on the economy? There's no clearer statement of the importance of war to capitalism than Donald Rumsfeld's speech to US armed forces in Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo: "How much should we spend on the armed services?... My view is we don't spend on you, we invest in you. The men and women in the armed services are not a drain on our economic strength. Indeed you safeguard it. You're not a burden on our economy, *you are the critical foundation for growth.*"

## Cheney

Cheney avoided the draft (conscription) in the Vietnam War. "I had other priorities in the 60s than military service," Cheney said in 1989; but he told the Senate that he "would have been obviously happy to serve had I been called."

He got his start in politics as Rumsfeld's sidekick in the 70s, and later served as Defence Secretary for George Bush senior, where he appointed Colin Powell as Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Under the slogan, "Arms for America's friends and arms control for its potential foes," Cheney, oblivious to irony, attacked allies Panama and Iraq. He also sent troops into Somalia.

In 1992, Cheney hired an oil services and construction company called Halliburton to provide a report on privatising certain army functions, such as constructing camps and providing food. The report – for which Halliburton was paid nearly \$9 million – of course, recommended that the privatisation go ahead. The privatisation was one of the largest carried out by the military, and a windfall for Halliburton.

Two and a half years after leaving his job at the Pentagon, Cheney became chief executive officer of Halliburton. He had no experience in business administration or construction, but he did have a close relationship with the military establishment. According to the current CEO of the company, David Lesar, Cheney "never pitched a particular contract or closed a piece of business. He opened the door." During Cheney's five years, the company doubled the amount of revenue it received from government contracts.

Not satisfied with these plum contracts, the Halliburton subsidiary responsible for military contracting, Kellogg, Brown and Root, was charged with swindling the Pentagon during the mid-1990s, and forced to pay a settlement of \$2 million to avoid criminal charges.

Cheney has more than repaid Halliburton since becoming Vice-President. Kellogg, Brown and Root is involved in the construction of cells for Al Qaeda and Taleban prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, and military bases in Central Asia and Afghanistan. According to the *New York Times*, KBR's services in Central Asia will cost the government ten to 20 percent more than if the military performed the services itself. ■



Dick Cheney

# Bali bombing – politicians' hypocrisy

By Australian socialists Louise O'Shea and Corey Oakley

"How terror took hold in our suburbs."  
"We're Next." "The face of evil."

These are the kind of headlines emanating from the supposedly respectable broadsheet papers, as the hysteria following the Bali bombings turned viciously on Australia's Muslim population.

Howard had little luck using the Bali bombing as ammunition to wage war on Iraq, but as a tool to whip up racism in Australia, it has been the best thing to happen to the Liberals since the *Tampa* and September 11.

Mosques have been firebombed, and attacks on Muslim women wearing veils on the street have increased. A new raft of repressive "anti-terrorist" legislation is back on the agenda.

And raids on Muslim families – complete with machine gun wielding scum from the Federal Police – cemented the atmosphere of hysterical racism.

All the racism built into Australian society has come to the fore.

With regards to the Bali bombings themselves, where was all the concern about the Balinese lives lost in the tragedy? While Australians were flown out to hospitals in Australia, the Balinese were left to rot in under-resourced Third World conditions.

On the same night as the Australians were killed, a bombing took place in Manado, the capital of mostly Christian North Sulawesi, which clearly targeted Indonesians. The media saw fit to completely ignore this tragedy.

Similarly, the day of mourning for the victims of Bali was one day before the anniversary of the sinking of the *SIEV X*,



an Indonesian fishing boat carrying asylum seekers. 353 people drowned as the Australian Navy watched on and did nothing. Yet Howard still claims that terrorists are the biggest threat to people's safety!

John Howard's display of grief over dead Australians in Bali was breathtaking in its hypocrisy. His supposed concern stands in stark contrast to his main occupation – attacking the living standards of these very same Australians.

Since he's been in office, Howard has made life unbearable for hundreds of thousands of workers by cutting back welfare, health and education spending, as well as by attacking the unions which defend wages and working conditions. Howard expects the 7.1 percent of Australians currently unemployed to live below the poverty line on \$180 a week, while the Australian Council of Social Services estimates that 13 percent of the total population live in poverty.

Despite this shameless disregard for the wellbeing of Australians, Howard expects that by pretending to care about their suffering following a particular

tragedy, Australians will "rally together" (behind him) and unite as Australians. But as Howard's hypocrisy demonstrates, all Australians don't share a special bond just because they happen to be ruled by the same lot of smarmy politicians.

The policies of the Liberal government – made up entirely of "fellow Australians" – make the lives of ordinary Australians much more difficult, not refugees in detention centres. But so long as Howard can use events like the Bali bombing to convince people that they have more to fear from Muslim "terrorists" and refugees, he can get away with undermining living standards and attacking unions.

## Is there a "national interest"?

Of course it didn't go all Howard's way. Opposition to the war held firm at over 50 percent of the population in the wake of the attack. The Greens have come out against the war, and the ALP has tentatively tried to distance itself from the Liberals' hardline pro-war stance. But their opposition to war is couched firmly in the terms of Australia's "national interest."

Following the Bali bombings, Greens Senator Bob Brown stated that "this event underscores the need for Australia to have a policy of regional defence and engagement rather than global stratagems at the behest of Washington. Australia should not join the invasion of Iraq. We should concentrate our resources in the neighbourhood."

What? So the SAS should be brought home from the Middle East to invade Indonesia or to raid Muslim homes?

And Simon Crean posed his hesitations about fully supporting a war on Iraq, not in terms of opposition to US imperialism or the slaughter of thousands of Iraqis, but rather by arguing that war on Iraq is not an effective way of fighting terrorism.

The fact that there is mainstream opposition to the war is of vital importance. But the nationalistic framework for this opposition, in essence, justifies the attacks on Muslims in Australia. What is talk of "regional security" other than an excuse to pass repressive new "anti-terrorist" laws?

What is it other than a justification of armed raids on people's houses, a justification for increased military spending to protect "our" borders from supposedly crazed Indonesian Islamists?

The Greens in particular say they are opposed to the crackdown on civil liberties, and the racism associated with "fighting terrorism" in our own backyard. But their acceptance that the question of what we need to do about terrorism is on a par with fighting the threat of war pushes them in the direction of lining up with the racists.

To consistently fight against war and racism we need to be clear that, far from sharing any kind of "national interest" with our rulers, they are the main enemy.

The real threat to our security is posed by attacks on our unions and student organisations and by ASIO thugs, backed to the hilt by Howard and Crean. The US spy base at Pine Gap, designed to coordinate the intercontinental nuclear missiles of the US military, is an infinitely

greater threat to human life than any terrorist. The Australian ruling class lobbied the US for decades for the right to have such a weapon of mass destruction on Australian soil.

All the talk about the "national interest" is also used to cover up the bloody role of Australian militarism in the region. East Timor is a clear case in point.

For 25 years Australian governments backed Indonesia's bloody occupation of East Timor to preserve "stability" in the region. John Howard did not send troops



to Timor in 1999 because he was in the least bit concerned about the lives of the East Timorese but because the Indonesian military had failed to suppress the independence movement and could no longer guarantee "stability."

Australian troops were sent in to preserve Australia's "strategic interests" and to pave the way for Australian businesses to dominate the new East Timorese economy. So now Telstra runs the telecommunications sector and Australia gets ten percent of East Timorese oil for nothing. Australia's domination of the Asia Pacific region is no different than that of the US on a much larger scale – and both should be opposed.

Socialists oppose wars because they involve the murder of innocent people, the destruction of the environment and communities, and they end up costing workers in the countries that wage them

billions of dollars in military expenditure. And all in the name of profit.

But the central question is the expansion of the influence of the world's superpowers and their constituent multinationals. National pride – identification of the interests of the mass of people with the interests of a government or nation state – is a key ideological tool which people like George W. Bush and John Howard use to try and convince us to go along with war. For this reason the anti-war movement must consistently oppose nationalism if we are to convince masses of people to oppose war.

Over the next nine years, the Australian government plans to increase military spending by \$23.5 billion. This money will undoubtedly come out of the health, welfare and education budgets, making life much more difficult for workers.

Workers in Australia have so much more to gain by standing with their counterparts in Iraq, the US and the rest of the world against their governments, who are more interested in killing people than feeding them. Only by rejecting nationalism and opposing the war internationally can the priorities of this murderous world system be challenged.

So for all John Howard's tears, the forgotten victims of the Bali bombing will be Iraqis who will die in the upcoming war, and the Australian workers who will end up paying for it. ■

# He says it...



# she does it!

## Asians are welcome here: Racism and the great "immigration" swindle

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water, Winston Peters is back. Spewing the same racist filth, fear and lies that have saved NZ First time and again, Peters is trying to create a space for himself in the political scene by bringing up the "issue" of immigration.

And, what's worse, Winston says it – Labour does it. Only days after Peters started his latest vile and racist campaign of abuse against Asians, Labour's Lianne Dalziel announced a new government policy that would see migrants without university level English refused entry. This policy is a blatant capitulation to Peters' campaign, and it is based on exactly the same false logic which drives NZ First.

**Dougal McNeill** debunks NZ First's claims, and argues that all immigration controls are racist.

### Are Asians "flooding" the country?

No. Pure and simple.

The most recent statistics available (see [www.dol.govt.nz](http://www.dol.govt.nz) for proof) show that Chinese and Indians make up only a third of all arrivals to New Zealand. 3,512 Chinese arrived between 1 July and 16 November this year – less than the 4,160 whites from South Africa and Great Britain who arrived in the same period. Peters claims to be trying to get a debate started around "the facts" – this is a lie. His rhetoric of "the Balkanisation of our country" and immigrants "mainly from the third world" show that his campaign has far

more to do with skin colour than immigration itself.

It is in fact nothing whatsoever to do with "immigration" – it is anti-Asian racism.

Besides, even if there were a high level of immigration into New Zealand (as happened after World War II when big business was desperate for cheap labour) this wouldn't mean anything bad for New Zealand workers. Study after study has shown that increased levels of immigration either increase employment or have no effect on employment levels. The idea that migrants are "stealing" jobs off "us" is just a cheap excuse from our rulers to try and turn attention away from their own profit-hungry cuts to job numbers.

When unemployment was at its lowest in NZ huge numbers of workers from Polynesian countries moved here in search of better pay and chances, at no harm to the job prospects of workers already here. It's the squeeze that's gone on profits at the collapse of the long post-war boom, and the willingness of employers to cut jobs whatever the cost, that has caused unemployment – not new migrants. And it was only with the squeeze of profits that the infamous dawn raids on Pacific Island homes in the 1970s began, and the anti-immigrant racism of Peters' hero Muldoon swung in.

The idea that migrants are flooding the country and stealing jobs is not a new one – the newspapers have been full of it every time it suits their owners. And, for as long as this system has existed, the bosses have been able to take their wealth and capital around the world as they choose. Workers should be able to do the same. Cash is always welcome – notice how quick Labour was to point out its changes wouldn't affect business migrants as badly – but people with

pressing humanitarian and social needs are not.

### But surely immigrants should take on board "our" culture when they arrive?

"Become real New Zealanders" Peters told migrants in his speech to NZ First's conference. But what is a "Real New Zealander"? Is NZ First calling for all new arrivals to be able to speak Te Reo Māori, the language of Aotearoa's



*Struggles by Asian workers (Left and next two pages) – workers have far more in common with each other than their bosses or racist scum like Winston Peters*

tangata  
whenua, to  
university level? Is it calling for new arrivals to be familiar with the heritage of Chinese people, many of whom have families who settled in New Zealand during the 1860s gold rush? Or the Irish who fled their country in poverty?

The answer, of course, is no. What NZ First mean by "real New Zealanders" is a fantastic illusion of a monocultural English New Zealand that never existed in the first place. This idea of "our" culture is simply a cover for the kind of anti-Asian environment Peters is trying to create.

Pākehā workers have nothing to fear from Asian immigrants, and nothing to gain from defending "their" culture. It is through collective struggle of issues common to us all – better pay, safe

conditions, child care and so on – that workers of all cultures can share experiences and strength. We have more in common with our Taiwanese and Indian co-workers than we do with greedy scumbag New Zealand bosses like Doug Myers or overpaid politicians like Peters.

### But surely it's good to open the immigration debate?

Some mainstream sources, while opposing Peters' arguments, say that it is necessary to have "the immigration debate." While sounding reasonable, this position in fact has already surrendered to the worst racism of NZ First's non-arguments. An issue requires substantial and conflicting interests, opinions and facts to rationally discuss and debate. There is no immigration issue to speak of!

As already noted, numerous academic studies have proved immigration does not damage jobs. It's a sick joke to read mainly Pākehā politicians and journalists talking about the future of "our" nation being changed by Asians – after all, New Zealand is made up entirely of the descendants of migrants. And this is a

country based on the systematic theft of Māori land by the rulers of those new migrants.

Labour has gone one step further than welcoming the “debate,” and has followed Peters through with his racist demands. This capitulation will not stop NZ First’s campaign; rather, it will make the racists stronger and more confident. As Labour does nothing to improve the lives of working people Peters’ scapegoating can, for a minority, appeal as a vent for their frustration and anger. By crumbling so easily to Peters’ pressure, the government has signalled quite clearly that any hopes workers, immigrants or others might have in them will be disappointed each and every time the Right tries to steal their rhetorical thunder. ■



## So how do we fight against Peters?

“Education, that’s the answer” – this is the line you hear from many liberals, and recently the Pan Asian Congress has been founded, with prominent lawyer Mai Chen as its spokesperson, to champion migration issues. Peters, for the Congress, is “stirring up racism” and people need to be educated out of it.

Although the members of the Congress may be sincere anti-racists, and may have very good intentions, the idea that “education” is the solution is badly mistaken, and potentially fatal to any anti-racist movement. Working people in NZ or anywhere else are not naturally racist, with Peters “stirring up” a sentiment they all feel. Indeed, the most recent polling by TVNZ showed a clear majority of people had no problem with the level of immigration, or with the number of Asians in the country.

Peters is *creating* racism, he is not simply stirring it up. He is targeting a group, smearing them with lurid tales of victims of “Asian crime...terrified into silence” (all quotes are from NZ First’s website) and trying to create a situation where the problems of the country are identified with this group. We don’t need to educate people out of this, we need to organise to fight it!

The Pan Asian Congress aims to be “non-political,” with the Governor-General as its sponsor and Helen Clark indicating her support. But Clark showed how much her support is worth when her government decided to try and implement exactly the kind of anti-Asian policy Peters wants. We need to build an anti-racist, pro-immigration movement that tackles this threat in a thoroughly political, combative way.

When Peters targets migrants, we need to target the company heads and bosses with their obscene salaries. When Peters blames Asians for congested roads and inadequate health services we need to point out government cuts in spending and underfunding. We need to make it obvious to our friends, workmates, family and flatmates that immigrants are far more likely to be our fellow workers, students and unemployed



than they are to be wealthy mansion owners. Their fights are our fights.

Peters will not be stopped by "education," and the Labour government will feel free to carry through its racist immigration reforms while pretending to support the Congress. But we can stop them. To do so, we need to build a movement that actively fights both these proposed rule changes and NZ First, tying both fights into the broader struggle for better conditions in Aotearoa. We need to build vocal, visible and broad rallies of migrants and non-migrants to protest NZ First's racism and, if necessary, to stop them spreading their anti-Asian rubbish.

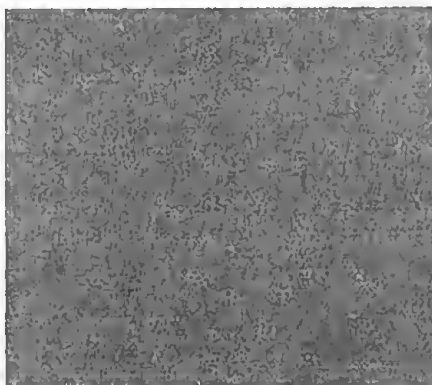
By making our opposition visible we can show to other workers and students that there are people who see through these lies and who will fight it. This can build the confidence of migrants who have been the targets of the kind of racist abuse and assaults Peters' hysteria promotes, and can make it clear to them and to Peters and his supporters that we're serious about fighting racist bigots. ■

## A world without borders

There is only one race – the human race. We began emigrating from Africa 100,000 years ago and have been wandering the earth ever since. The profit motive fully conquered the world only in the last 200 years. Most modern borders were created even more recently. The borders that welcome money but exclude human beings are not eternal. In the story of our species they have only appeared in the last five seconds – and in the past they have often been transcended by revolutions, political movements and people without corporate credit cards.

We oppose *all* immigration controls as racist and hypocritical. The capital of the bosses has always been free to go where it likes, so should we. People who are prepared to make the massively difficult emotional, financial and physical step of leaving their home, family and loved ones for a new land are clearly making a major commitment. We should welcome them as fellow workers who can enrich our experiences, our lives and the collective strength we have as a class.

It is an outrage that we live in a world where human life and need are dictated to by the greed and corporate needs of a few, a world where refugees are refused shelter or are locked in concentration camps. Our message is Asians are welcome – racists are not. Together, we can build a movement across nation and identity to fight the system that breeds the racism, oppression and exploitation of us all. ■







## Firenze, città aperta [Florence, the Opened City]

Report from the European Social Forum  
6-9 November

Tony Hartin reports on an important step forward for the European Left

**Tuesday 7pm** – Standing in the queue for my flight to Pisa it becomes obvious that the people in front and behind are also bound for the ESF. In fact the flight is half-full of conference goers. Announcements about ESF are made in-flight by the stewardess.

**Tuesday 9pm** – We meet trouble at Pisa passport control. Foreign passports are scrutinised at great length, bags are searched and there are a couple of deportations of people arrested at a recent anti-nuclear protest in Scotland. However, after customs we are met by a group of COBAS/antagonistas. They make welcoming speeches and then drive us through the back streets of Pisa to their social centre. The circuitous route is to avoid the waiting Polizia (we saw them along the way). Berlusconi's media has been talking up trouble...

The social centre is a mixture of squat and organising centre. Banners are being painted in the yard, there is an extensive library and media centre, a couple of meeting rooms, kitchen, bathroom and a bar. Our hosts make more political

The Carabinieri preparations seem as if they were expecting an invasion by the red army. We are told by our Italian hosts that there will be no attempt on the fence as we must all get to Florence

**Wednesday 8pm** – After a rousing send-off at Pisa station we arrive in Florence. At the Pizzeria where we eat, the waiter asks us for a red flag to hang in the window. A plain red flag is not satisfactory – it has to have writing on it – so we give him a Socialist Workers' Party flag with fist symbol. He is happy. We make our way to a sports stadium where we will sleep for the next few nights. The stadium – completely taken over by the conference – is another world in itself – a space free of sexism and worries of theft. There is much mixing of languages – everyone wants to be able to communicate with each other. Every morning we are woken by a political speech arguing why it is necessary to get up and go to meetings. In the bathrooms people are whistling the Internationale – when we reach the chorus it is sung simultaneously in half a dozen languages.



speeches – there is a protest near Pisa tomorrow that we will all be going to – they cook us a pasta meal and we all make friends over several beers. We sleep where we were standing.

**Wednesday 7am** – We are woken to another meal prepared by our hosts, and we have some time for the Pisa sights before the rally. The headline in the Berlusconi papers is "Demonstration today – Pisa trembles."

**Wednesday 11am** – we assemble at Pisa stazione for the buses to a nearby US military base – Camp Darby. There are many protesters, also many Carabinieri in full riot gear. The Italians start chanting *Bastardi!* and *Assassini!* These riot cops are the brutes of Genoa. We pile on buses bedecked with red flags and make our way to the US base to many a stirring Italian revolutionary song.

**Wednesday 3pm** – Buses have been shuttling demonstrators all day long and we set out on a march some 5,000 – 10,000 strong. The march is in high spirits and many a great speech is made outside the main gates of the camp. Our contingent of 30 UK protesters (those on our flight) is greeted with much joy.

**Thursday 9am** – There is a massive crowd outside the registration centre for the conference. People are banging on the windows with impatience to get in. Organisers were hoping for 20,000 delegates – in fact around 60,000 registered. The conference is centred in the Fortezza Basso – a huge Renaissance fort. It is a riot of politics, chants, flags and meetings. Each morning and afternoon sees simultaneous meetings of thousands. The central building in the Fortezza is awash with dozens of organisations' tables – books, flags, newspapers, songs, debates and information.



**Friday** – The numbers arriving at the forum continue to increase. Our sports stadium is jam-packed with people, yet it continues to function smoothly. Everyone has a willingness to get along – it makes living much easier. Buses are free for us as is entrance to museums and parks.

march – due to start at 3pm. Our contingent stretches for city blocks and is some 3,000-4,000 strong.

**Saturday 1pm** – 300,000 have already assembled two hours before the march is due to begin. We start the main march now, two hours early, in order to leave room for more to assemble. Our march

jam-packs the city streets from pavement to pavement. International contingents march at the front of the march, headed overall by striking Fiat workers. In our contingent, we assemble in international groups – the Turkish comrades

despite weeks of Berlusconi's propaganda about there being blood on the streets today.

**Saturday 5pm** – Our part of the march reaches the sports stadium endpoint. People are still assembling and starting to march at the beginning point. We are now 600,000-800,000 strong. Three separate marches are taking place purely because there is no more room on the march route.

**Saturday 8.30pm** – The march is still arriving at the end point where a fantastic concert is in progress. Our numbers now reach one million – this in a city whose population is only 400,000. Not a single Carabinieri has dared to show their face and there has not been a single incident. This is a most powerful argument against Berlusconi and his ilk who tell us that we need the police and that another world is not possible.

We now know that it is possible – we saw it in action for the last four days. This event has been a tremendous step forward for the European Left. ■



Food and drink is discounted. Florence adopts the epithet "Aperta Citta" – the Opened City.

At the Fortezza the constant mill of leftists is giving way to spontaneous chants, marches and speeches. It feels as if we have captured the Fort and are planning our next step to take the city. The mixing of the international groups is ongoing. I have dinner with Polish comrades, drinks with the Dutch comrades, chants with the Greek comrades.

**Saturday 11am** – The IS tendency contingent forms in the Fortezza and marches to an assembly point for the main

head the Greeks – Globalise Resistance, High School students and university students make up the front. The Scottish Socialist Party happens to march in front of Refondazione. The Refondazione comrades demand that we teach them English chants, and in turn they teach us some Italian ones.

**Saturday 3pm** – We reach the working class districts of Firenze. Residents line the streets and cheer, or hang white sheets with painted slogans from their windows. Many houses are closed though – we are later to find out why: The vast majority of Firenze's population are on the streets behind us in the Italian contingents. This is



# obituary

## Joan Littlewood

October 6 1914 – September 20 2002

Joan Littlewood, a major radical political theatre figure in Britain, died in September, aged 87. She broke up the fabric, revolutionised the way that plays were presented, the way that they were written, and the way directors and actors and writers collaborated. During the 1950s and 60s she transformed British drama. She challenged the conservative and snobbish concept of theatre then prevalent.

Her commitment to the working class audience saw accents that were heard for the first time on stage in Britain. That is, the working class not merely as caricature, but as representative of genuine working class life. She showed a commitment to socialism and the collective and democratic character that could exist in theatre. But above all, she used theatre as a tool that could somehow relate and deal with the reality of those working class people.

Rather than theatre itself being the agency that could bring about change to this reality, Littlewood's commitment to theatre first and foremost came from wanting to emphasise a working class audience that was *part* of that reality. Theatre for Littlewood, was a weapon that she used as part of her social and political commitment to change. Asked about her political beliefs last year she laughed and said "Oh, I've always been a communist. How could you not be?"

The impact of her best work, including productions of Brendan Behan's *The Quare Fellow*, Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* and the 1963 satire on WWI *Oh What a Lovely*



*War!*, were enormous and far reaching. My personal favourite is Behan's *The Quare Fellow* – a play that is an overwhelming indictment of capital punishment without a hint of sentimentality and soaked in humour – as Littlewood puts it – "the prisoner is about to be topped for murder, and yet you never stopped laughing."

Joan Littlewood inspired a whole generation of radical theatre. Her work had a massive impact on theatre and continues to do so. ■

Shomi Yoon



**Hundreds of socialists and activists from around the US – and the world – at the closing rally of *Socialism 2002* in Chicago earlier this year.** The conference featured activists from the front lines of some of today's most important battles – from Ken Riley, the president of the International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422 in South Carolina, to Palestinian rights activists Rania Masri and Naseer Aruri. And socialists and activists from across the globe – from Argentina and Brazil to Greece, Italy and Canada – came to talk about their own fights and show their solidarity. ■

Slowly... but surely...

# Union membership and strike activity continue to rise

Figures show union membership continues to rise – along with an overall increase in strike activity.

The annual report from Victoria University's Industrial Relations Centre shows that a total of 329,919 people belonged to trade unions as of December 2001, an increase of nine percent from the December 1999 figure. In the same period the number of people in paid employment rose by 4.3 percent – meaning that union membership is rising at twice the rate of employment growth.

Meanwhile the Statistics Department's latest work stoppages report, which measures complete and partial strikes as well as lockouts by employers, shows that after crashing following the 1991 Contracts Act and remaining at historically low levels during the 1990s, the number of stoppages has started rising again in the last two years.

But there's still a long way to go. After reaching a low point in the year to December 2000, when only 21 strikes or lockouts involving 2,632 workers took place, the figures have increased to 46 actions involving 24,580 workers for the year to June 2002 – but this is only just over half the figure for 1996 – and still well down on pre-Contracts Act figures.

A much less scientific but perhaps more real feeling for this slow recovery is the *visibility* of industrial action – almost every day the newspapers carry reports of some sort of strike – when even just a couple of years ago it was possible

to know about just about every single action taking place!

Still, we need to be careful not to get carried away – strikes remain at historically low levels and most workers lack the confidence to fight unless their officials take the lead.

Union officials argue that the main factor behind this halting recovery is the new Employment Relations Act. PSA national secretary Bryce Fleury describes it as a turning point with a general acceptance amongst workers that it's now okay to be a union member.

This is of course complete rubbish and involves a reversal of cause and effect. As we pointed out a year ago ("Unions: The Beginning of the Recovery?" *Socialist Review* 8 (Spring 2001)), the main purpose of the "new" industrial relations legislation was not to give workers or trade unions greater power at the expense of bosses. Rather it was to strengthen the hand of the paid union officials in relation to their members.

In other words long-term economic conditions, in particular gradually falling real incomes, not the "union-friendly" Labour government, are forcing workers to re-forge workplace organisation and (slowly) take more strike action to maintain their wages and conditions. The

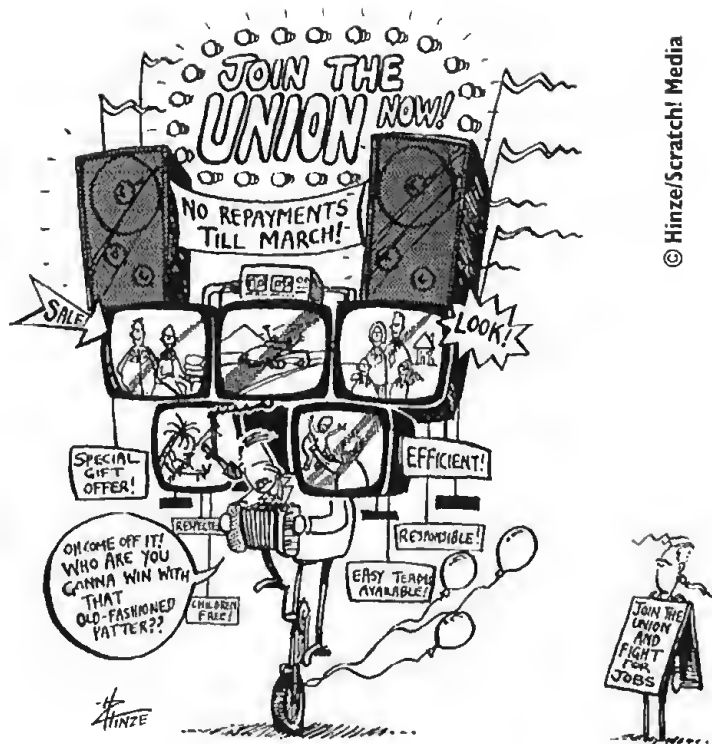
ERA is an attempt to ensure that when these actions happen they are firmly under the control of union officials with a stake in maintaining "industrial harmony" and "good relations with employers."

As the teachers' dispute clearly showed, because their day-to-day activities often involve far more contact with management than their own members, union officials often try to dampen down struggles that clearly have the support of most union members.

The teachers' dispute was very important – for the first time in many years a significant and well-organised group of workers took action in open defiance of the union leadership. It would have been hard to imagine this happening in the first couple of years of the Labour government – when union officials were able to convince members to "give Labour a chance," and not "alienate public support." But these arguments simply don't wash with an increasing number of union members.

As the union movement continues to recover in the coming years, reorganising a strong network of rank-and-file activists will be vital to defend and advance workers' interests. ■

Andrew Cooper



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# Socialism and war

By Duncan Hallas

*British socialist Duncan Hallas, who died at the end of September, was a lifelong revolutionary. After involvement in an Army protest in Egypt at the end of WW II for which he spent three months in jail, he became one of the founding members of the Socialist Review Group, which was the forerunner of the International Socialists.*

*Although ill health forced him to step back from political activity in the mid-1990s, he remained a popular and inspiring speaker at rallies and educational meetings.*

*This article, first published during the 1982 Falkland Islands War, is a classic account of the socialist position on such conflicts – and the coming war against Iraq.*



We are not pacifists, we detest the Galtieri dictatorship, we dismiss the notion that the Argentinian seizure of the Falklands is progressive on anti-colonialist grounds. Nevertheless we believe that, in a war between Britain and Argentina, the defeat of British Imperialism is the lesser evil. The main enemy is at home.

None of these statements, perhaps, is so self-evidently true as to pass by mere assertion. Let us therefore return to basics. What are the criteria by which socialists determine their attitude to war in general and to a given war? An excellent starting point is the opening passage of Lenin's *Socialism and War* written amidst the slaughter of 1915:

Socialists have always condemned wars between nations as barbarous and brutal. Our attitude towards war, however, is fundamentally different to that of the bourgeois pacifists (supporters and advocates of peace) and of the anarchists. We differ from the former in that we understand the inevitable connection between wars and the class struggle within a country: we understand that wars cannot be abolished unless classes are abolished

and socialism is created; we also differ in that we regard civil wars, ie wars waged by an oppressed class against the oppressor class, by slaves against slaveholders, by serfs against landlords and by wage workers against the bourgeoisie, as fully legitimate, progressive and necessary. We Marxists differ from both pacifists and anarchists in that we deem it necessary to study each war historically (from the standpoint of Marx's historical materialism) and separately.

War is always "barbarous and brutal," often horribly so. Think of the bombing, the napalm, the defoliation, the atrocities perpetrated by US forces in Vietnam or by the Khmer Rouge. War is always an evil and it generates other evils too. Therefore, goes the "anti-war in principle" argument, it should be rejected regardless of circumstances. No more war.

There is a healthy and progressive strand in this attitude and it is often connected with a rudimentary kind of class consciousness. "It's a rich man's war but a poor man's fight," went the slogan of the opponents of conscription in the American Civil War.

I remember seeing, in an ordinary commercial cinema in Manchester a year or two after the end of the Second World War, a showing of the classic anti-war film *All Quiet on the Western Front*. At the point where one German soldier says to another, "We should make the generals and politicians fight it out with clubs," the audience, a fair number of whom must have been ex-soldiers, burst into loud and spontaneous applause.

That was a good spirit, a thousand times better than the patriotic flag-waving of the Labour Party leaders then and now.

But by itself it will not do. Marx and Engels and their followers supported the North in the American Civil War.

Some of them, mostly German exiles, fought voluntarily for the Union. And they were right. For in spite of the horrors, the slaughter, the mutilations, frauds and the fortunes made out of war profiteering, the war for the destruction of slavery was a just and progressive one.

The judgement is political, which brings us to Clausewitz's classic definitions:

The war of a community – of whole nations and particularly of civilised nations – always starts from a political condition and is called forth by a political motive. It is, therefore, a political act... War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means. All beyond this which is strictly peculiar to war relates merely to the peculiar nature of the means which it uses.

The peculiarity of the means is stated by Clausewitz with his characteristic brutal clarity and total lack of hypocrisy:

War is therefore an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will.

All of which is incontestably true and fundamentally important. One

thing follows immediately. For revolution is precisely "an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will." It is much more than that of course, but it is that or it is nothing.

But we cannot stop there. Since, in any class society, the ruling classes invariably resort to force to defend their rule – the rejection in principle of the use of force for political ends (not always, not usually, but in appropriate circumstances) is tantamount to abandoning the struggle for fundamental social change, for a classless society, for socialism.

Further, because wars cannot be abolished unless classes are abolished and socialism is established, the anti-war "in principle" position, if widely adopted by workers, guarantees the inevitability of future wars. The pacifist position, notwithstanding its humane impulses, is deeply conservative. That is why we are not pacifists.

But nuclear war, the threat of the nuclear holocaust, does that not alter the position entirely? It alters it



*The Argentine warship Belgrano sinks during the 1982 Falklands War*



certainly, but it does not change the underlying realities. There have been 100 or so wars since the United States Air Force dropped the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, all non-nuclear (although some only just).

Nuclear war between the superpowers has not happened because it is not in the interests, rationally considered, of either of their ruling classes. That is not to say that it cannot happen, merely to say that the holocaust, an ever present danger, cannot be avoided by burying one's head in the pacifist sand. It can only be avoided, in the end, by striking the nuclear weapons out of the hands of the ruling classes – by revolution.

From these most serious and weighty matters we turn to an affair that would be farcical if it were not so squalid and potentially dangerous – the Falklands (or Malvinas, if you prefer) crisis.

Back in the 1730s a certain Captain Jenkins, a smuggler and a pirate according to the Spanish authorities who then ruled much of South America, a peaceful and eminently respectable merchant skipper according to his friends, was arrested by the Spanish Guardia Costa and had his left ear lopped off in the scuffle. The then equivalent of the *Daily Mail* and the Tory backbenches went into paroxysms of hysterical rage.

The outcome, the "War of Jenkins' Ear," had about as much to do with the matter as the "right to self-determination" of the Falkland Islanders has today. It was a transparent pretext. What was at issue was the slave trade, a highly profitable business in which British slavers came out on top through various wars.

There is, however, a difference. There was then a serious issue in dispute between the two ruling classes. The British bourgeoisie was determined to

break into the South American markets and the rulers of Spanish America in Madrid were equally determined to keep them out.

In the "War of Jenkins' Ear," Jenkins was simply an excuse. Had he never been born, the outcome would have been the same, give or take a year or two. But now the excuse has become the reason. What we have now is the war, if it develops into a war, of Thatcher's face (in the Chinese sense) and of Galtieri's face too.



Margaret Thatcher

There is no longer a rational, if predatory, cause of dispute. The Falklands are of no great significance. Pure prestige and internal politics are the driving force on both sides.

True, there is talk of oil; but whether it exists or not is neither here nor there. After all, Thatcher's government is busy trying to "privatise" the British National Oil Corporation, foreign oil companies hold a good deal of the North Sea and foreign multinationals operate freely in Galtieri's Argentina.

The claim on the British side that Thatcher is motivated by concern for the people of the islands, that "the interests of the Falkland Islanders must be paramount," is a masterpiece of

impudent hypocrisy.

Under British rule, the inhabitants of the Falklands have never even been allowed a freely elected local government with the powers of a town council, let alone "self-determination." Many of them are not even allowed security of tenure of their houses but are forced to accept the tied cottage system operated by the British Falklands Company which owns most of the useful grazing land. No serious consideration to the interests of the Falklanders had been given by any British government until the Argentinian invasion. Moreover, both Thatcher's government and Callaghan's before it have had secret negotiations with successive Argentinian governments about the future of the islands without any reference to the inhabitants, let alone the referendum now bruited about.

In any case, the self-determination argument is spurious to the core. A declining population of less than what would make a respectable turnout at a fourth division football match on an off-day, and lacking any social, ethnic, linguistic, cultural or historical features of its own, cannot be seriously regarded as a "national" entity. A far more plausible case could be made for national self-determination for the Western Isles or the Isle of Man. And these more plausible cases would also be absurd and reactionary. For, as Lenin wrote:

If we want to understand the meaning of self-determination of nations without juggling with legal definitions, without inventing abstract definitions, but examining the historical and economic conditions of the national movements, we shall inevitably reach the conclusion that self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from other national bodies, the formation of an independent national state.

In the present case there is neither a national movement nor any possibility of a national state. The self-



determination argument is a fraud perpetrated to put a "democratic" gloss on support for Thatcher's military adventure.

So far as the Falklands are concerned that is all that there is to be said but, to avoid misunderstanding, it is as well to point out that, in any case, we do not unconditionally support the right of self-determination. We do not, for example, concede it to the Ulster Protestants, although they are indisputably a historically formed self conscious group with quasi-national characteristics. We reject the two nations theory for Ireland and we do so because its effect is plainly reactionary and not at all on the basis of legalistic quibbling about whether or not the Protestants do or do not have this or that "national" characteristic.

The "anti-colonialist" pretensions of the Argentinian dictatorship are not much better than the fraud of self-determination. True, Argentina has some sort of more or less plausible claim to the Falklands on historical and geographical grounds and, certainly, the islands are a British colony. But these are legal forms and abstract claims.

We support anti-colonial movements as movements of struggle by oppressed people against their oppressors and we support them because, as Marx said, "no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations."

None of this has much relevance to the Falklands. There is no Spanish speaking population struggling against British imperialism. For Galtieri, "anti-colonialism" is a convenient pretext to divert Argentinian workers away from their struggle against the dictatorship. The timing of the Argentinian invasion was no doubt influenced by the rising tide of demonstrations and strikes in Argentina. "National unity" in support

of a foreign quarrel is Galtieri's aim as well as Thatcher's and "national unity" means the subordinating of the workers to the bosses.

We are irreconcilably hostile to both governments and both regimes. But we are in Britain and not Argentina and therefore the British government, the British state, is the main enemy for us.

The Labour Party leaders, and even some Tories who enthusiastically supported the Pinochet coup in Chile, have discovered that the Argentinian regime is fascist. That, of course,



Tony Benn

changes everything! Strictly speaking, the Argentinian dictatorship is not real fascism but let that pass. Also leave aside the Tories. It is the "left wing" variant of this argument that matters. In essence, it is a very old one.

In 1907 the Second International meeting in Stuttgart adopted the famous resolution on war which states:

The Congress confirms the resolutions of previous International Congresses against militarism and imperialism and declares anew that the fight against militarism cannot be separated from the socialist class war as a whole.

Wars between capitalist states are as a rule the result of their rivalry for world markets... Further, these wars arise out of the never-ending armament race of militarism, which is one of the chief implements of bourgeois class rule and of the economic and political enslavement of the working classes.

Wars are encouraged by the prejudices of one nation against another, systematically purveyed among the civilised nations in the interests of the ruling classes, so as to divert the mass of the proletariat from the tasks of its own class, as well as from the duty of international class solidarity.

Wars are therefore inherent in the nature of capitalism. They will only cease when the capitalist economy is abolished ...

In the case of a threat of an outbreak of war, it is the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives in the countries taking part, fortified by the unifying activity of the International Bureau, to do everything to prevent the outbreak of war by whatever means seems to them most effective, which naturally differ with the intensification of the class war and of the general political situation.

Should war break out in spite of all this, it is their duty to intervene for its speedy end, and to strive with all their power to make use of the violent economic and political crisis brought about by the war to rouse the people, and thereby to hasten the abolition of capitalist class rule.

Five years later, at the Basle International Congress, this was unanimously reaffirmed, the British Labour Party delegates voting with the rest.

Two years after that, in 1914, the majority of the Labour and Social Democratic leaders in nearly all the warring states swallowed their words, abandoned the class struggle in favour of national unity and supported their "own" governments.

How did they justify this? Why, by pointing to the evils of the enemy regimes, of course.

The German Social Democratic majority, the most apposite comparison for our purpose, pointed to Russia. The tsar rules over the "prison house of peoples," they said. "He has most bloodily suppressed the movements of Russian workers and peasants in 1905-07. His is the most brutal, backward and vicious state in Europe, the

bulwark of European reaction for over 100 years."

Of course all this was perfectly true. Tsarist Russia was every bit as vile, vicious and reactionary as Galtieri's Argentina and a great deal more powerful. Moreover it had a long common frontier with Germany and the tsar's armies were actually invading ethnic German territory in East Prussia.

What did Liebknecht and Luxemburg and Mehring and Zetkin say in reply? They said, "You are scoundrels, you are traitors. You have betrayed the German workers' movement and the international workers' movement. Tsarism today is no different to what it was in 1907 and 1912 when you promised to oppose war. The war, for Germany, is a 'real political instrument' of the German bourgeoisie. You have deserted to the enemy and this desertion will not stop at temporary support for the war" – as was indeed proved in 1918-19 when these same pro-war "socialists" organised troops to shoot down German workers.

In Liebknecht's immortal words, "The main enemy is at home." Not the only enemy of course. "The tsar is an enemy but support for the Kaiser actually weakens Russian workers' opposition to the tsar and since the struggle against militarism cannot be separated from the socialist class war as a whole," support for our "own" government strengthens reaction everywhere.

Lenin and Trotsky and Rosmer and Connolly and MacLean and Debs all said, with appropriate national variations, exactly the same thing. All opposed their "own" government and its war. And they were absolutely right. Support for "one's own" ruling class in such a war is tantamount to abandoning the struggle for socialism. For their war is a continuation of their politics by other means. And so, exactly, with the War of Thatcher's Face.

One good thing, at any rate, has come out of the Falklands crisis. The reaction of the Labour Party leaders has proved decisively, conclusively and irrefutably that the illusions of so many left wingers that there has been, since 1979, a real swing to the left by the Labour Party have as much substance as fairy gold.

Michael Foot, wrapping himself in the Union Jack, and righteously denouncing the government's neglect of British interests (and outdoing Denis Healey in the process!) is one thing. The support and applause he got from the overwhelming majority of Labour MPs are quite another. Not just the right but most of the left MPs enthusiastically cheered him on. They collapsed into jingoism at the first test. It did not take the courage of a Liebknecht or a MacLean to speak out against the Falklands expedition. Merely a modicum of principle and backbone. That, in the vast majority of cases, was more than the left MPs could muster. What really matters is the spectacular demonstration of the lack of elementary class hatred, the indispensable gut reaction against militarism and war, on the Labour benches.

Can any sane person now believe that this crew, even if reinforced by reselection and conference resolutions, could stand up to the bourgeoisie in a real crisis where bourgeois interests are at stake? If you can't stand out, loud, clear, firm and, from the beginning, against a comic opera war in the South Atlantic, you will never resist the immeasurably greater pressures of the boss class against any attempt to impose economic policies they don't want, let alone achieve socialism.

Nor can too much be said in favour of Benn and the handful of others (including that unreconstructed right winger, Tam Dalyell) who did not back Thatcher.

Benn's position is basically, "Let the United Nations settle it." The UN is a club of governments. We know some of them: Thatcher's and Galtieri's, Reagan's and Brezhnev's and so on, enemies of their own and every other working class. Benn's position, in fact, is not very different from such important organs of bourgeois opinion as the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian*. It may well gain him some credit, especially if the expedition proves a failure, but there is not a spark of socialist internationalism in it.

As to the Labour leaders as a whole, left, right and centre, we have been fortunate to have a foretaste of their conduct in any future Labour government – cowardly, mean, chauvinist, grovelling before the ruling class. ■

# One year after the US "liberated" Afghanistan

By Sharon Smith

One year ago the US claimed victory in the war in Afghanistan, when its proxy army, the Northern Alliance, marched triumphantly into Kabul, routing the Taliban.

Also that week, news footage showing joyous throngs of Afghans welcoming the Americans and women ripping off their burkas – the full-body covering mandated by the Taliban – decisively won the public relations war at home. In the eyes of most people, these fleeting images provided evidence to verify Bush's claim that its war on terrorism "liberated" the Afghan people and brought "equality" to Afghan women.

For this reason, many people who oppose the coming war against Iraq continue to support the war in Afghanistan in particular and the war on terrorism more broadly. But how is "liberated" Afghanistan faring a year later? This question is all the more important as the US prepares for the next phase of its war, against Iraq – with administration hawks already eyeing Iran as the next potential target for "regime change."

"One year after the Americans promised a return to democracy, most of Afghanistan remains carved up among a collection of opulently thuggish warlords, many of them commanders of armies of mass rape, torture and murder from whom the country fled to the Taliban as an antidote six years ago," Geov Parrish of Working Assets wrote recently. The same warlords – still backed by the US – now pose "the greatest threats to stability in Afghanistan," according to the relief agency CARE.

Today, mass graves are the only acknowledgement of thousands of Pashtuns massacred by Northern Alliance warlords in the weeks before the US declared victory. "There are mass graves all across the North, and the Americans, who

know about this, have said nothing," a humanitarian worker told journalist Robert Fisk. The British *Guardian* newspaper estimated that up to 8,000 Afghans died in the bombing, with up to 20,000 more killed as an indirect consequence of the bombing – from starvation, cold and disease.

Nine out of ten Afghan women continue to wear the burka, while fundamentalists – having successfully changed the name of the country to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan – have launched a battle to enshrine strict Sharia law, like that of the Taliban, within Afghanistan's new constitution.

Recently, extreme fundamentalists embarked on a firebombing campaign against girls' schools – leaving behind threatening leaflets warning parents not to send their girls to school and ordering women not to appear in public without wearing the burka. Human Rights Watch reported in June: "Afghan women of all ethnicities have been compelled to restrict their participation in public life to avoid being targets of violent factions...[and] continue to face serious threats to their public safety, denying them the opportunity to exercise their basic human rights."

The abject poverty of the Afghan population, however, is the most glaring indictment of US aims in the war. In Afghanistan, the fourth poorest nation on earth, fully 95 percent of the population is illiterate; the same number has never seen a doctor or a nurse.

The US government has spent over \$10 billion in Afghanistan in the last 14 months. But roughly 85 percent of this impressive sum was spent on the bombing and financing Northern Alliance warlords and their private armies.

For 2002, the US promised just \$290 million – less than needed for emergency food aid for the millions of Afghans at risk for starvation, and nothing to rebuild the water treatment and electrical plants it destroyed.

Afghan police killed two Kabul students after hundreds rioted, saying they had no electricity or running water in their dorms for seven straight days, and were turned away after standing in line for hours for food. One Kabul resident summed up the feelings of the mass of Afghans a year after the fall of the Taliban, telling the *Financial Times*, "Soldiers and guns don't feed us."

The misery unfolding in Afghanistan today unravels the myth that the war was fought with anything other than the narrow interests of US imperialism in mind. ■



# Is crime out of control?

By Shomi Yoon



What do capitalism, the system we live in, and crime have to do with one another? The media would like us to think that crime is committed by a few "bad apples." The media dutifully condemn crime but they also delight in crime stories, overwhelmingly focusing on "street crime," like theft, burglary, prostitution and drug dealing. But usually these criminals are powerless individuals pursuing crime to survive.

This differs from the criminal activities of the capitalist class, which aim to enhance the capitalist's existing position of relative economic power, status and competitiveness. The law is a defence for the capitalist class to protect their interests. Capitalist crime has an impact on a wider number of people in a less transparent manner, like tax frauds on a scale of millions of dollars. Furthermore this class has the ability to influence the very definition of what crime is. For example, preventable death in workplaces is not considered murder.

Just as working class crime is an extension of the circumstances we are forced to live in, so capitalist crime is an extension of the effects of the system. An

economy that is based on cutthroat competition, exploitation and alienation forces them to use any means necessary to secure an advantage over their competitors.

The legal system works to defend the existing capitalist society – an economy that necessarily produces a ruling capitalist class. In practice, this means that the criminalisation process is almost entirely directed at the very victims of this system. "Street crime" is most conspicuous because of the relative powerlessness of individual people, because they are most easily detected and controlled, and because of the class focus of the policing system.

Scum parties like ACT focus on crime because it presents a response, not merely to crime but to the whole social crisis of the period as part of a larger strategy of political, social and legal reform. In other words it gives the state an excuse to strengthen its repressive powers of "law and order." The focus on crime takes the bitterness, anger and alienation people feel towards the government and diverts the blame towards any marginalised group in society, whether it's young offenders or solo mothers. What the focus on crime really does is that it refuses to look at the root of why crime exists in the first place.

Crime is generated by capitalism. A system based on inequality, greed and wealth is bound to create the conditions in which at least some people find they have to steal in order to get by. A system that cramps people in inadequate, overcrowded housing and encourages people at every turn to look out only for

themselves is bound to push some into using violence against others.

## What is the socialist alternative?

The socialist answer is simple – remove the conditions that create crime in the first place! This means dealing with the inequality, the false "scarcity" and the alienation generated by our present society.

In a real democracy people would have equal access to resources. Preventing crime and disorder would be in the interest of everyone. The mass of people would be able to control their own lives for the first time.

The rationale for the vast majority of crime would turn to dust. Small scale property crime only exists because capitalism denies huge numbers of people the ability to live a decent life. Shoplifting would become irrational when people have access to their needs.

Violence against women would be taken seriously for the first time. The privatised world of personal relationships in which so much of it takes place would be opened up and be of concern to everyone.

A solution would not come immediately, but the filth we live in today would progressively be thrown off as women and men struggle together against oppression of every kind. The alienation and sexual repression forced on us by capitalism could be overcome.

Above all, the source of crime in poverty and alienation could be properly tackled for the first time as economic problems are sorted out and the bulk of the population takes control of the running of our own lives and society. ■



# just what **are** your politics anyway?

**The more observant among you may have noticed that this magazine's politics aren't quite the same as the mainstream media's. So just where do we stand? Below are some of the basic political ideas behind our magazine.**

**Socialism** Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit, not human need.

Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over its production or distribution. A new society can only be built when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and create a new state in which they will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment.

**Workers' Power** Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and want.

Liberation can be won only through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of all other classes and fighting for real workers' power – a new kind of state based on democratically elected workers' councils.

China and Cuba, like the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have nothing to do with socialism. They are repressive state capitalist regimes. We support the struggles of workers against every ruling class.

**Revolution Not Reformism** Despite the claims of Labour, Alliance and trade union leaders, the structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class.

They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against workers.

There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

**Internationalism** Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle.

We oppose everything that divides workers of different countries. We oppose all immigration controls.

We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose imperialism and support all genuine national liberation struggles.

**Liberation From Oppression** We fight for democratic rights. We are opposed to the oppression of women, Māori, Pacific Islanders, gays and lesbians. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class.

We support the right of all oppressed groups to organise for their own defence.

All these forms of liberation are essential to socialism and impossible without it.

**Tino Rangatiratanga** We support the struggle for tino rangatiratanga.

Māori capitalists and politicians have no interest in achieving tino rangatiratanga for working class Māori.

The Government and corporate warriors' approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Māori elite while doing little for working class Māori.

Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers' state and socialist society.

**Revolutionary Organisation** To achieve socialism, the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by day to day activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

We are beginning to build such a party, linking the ideas of revolutionary socialism to workers' struggles against the system. If you agree with our ideas and want to fight for socialism, we urge you to join us.

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of *Socialist Review* were

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